PART I

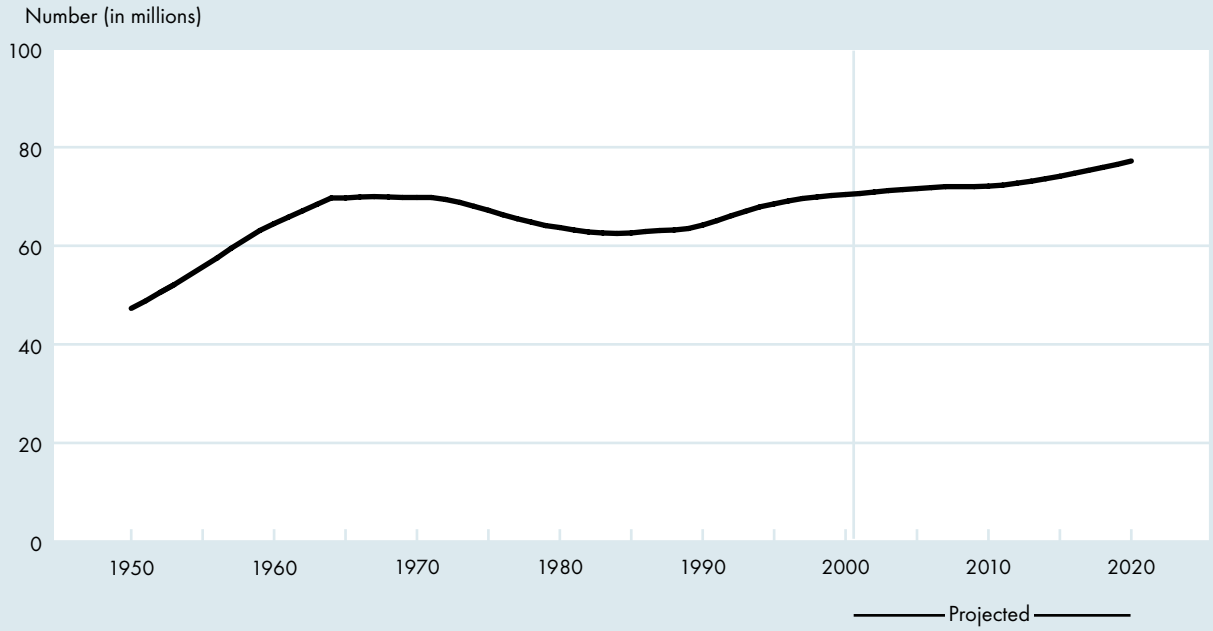
Population and Family Characteristics

Part I: *Population and Family Characteristics* presents data that illustrate the changes in the population and family contexts in which America's children are being raised. Eight key measures present data on trends in the size and composition of the child population, the composition of their families, and the environment in which they live. The background measures provide an important context for understanding the key indicators of well-being presented in Part II.

Child Population

The number of children determines the demand for schools, health care, and other services and facilities that serve children and their families.

Figure POP1 **Number of children under age 18 in the United States, 1950-2000 and projected 2001–20**



NOTE: All population figures for the year 2000 shown here are estimates based on the 1990 Census; they do not reflect Census 2000 counts. Population figures for 2001–20 are projections.

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates and Projections.

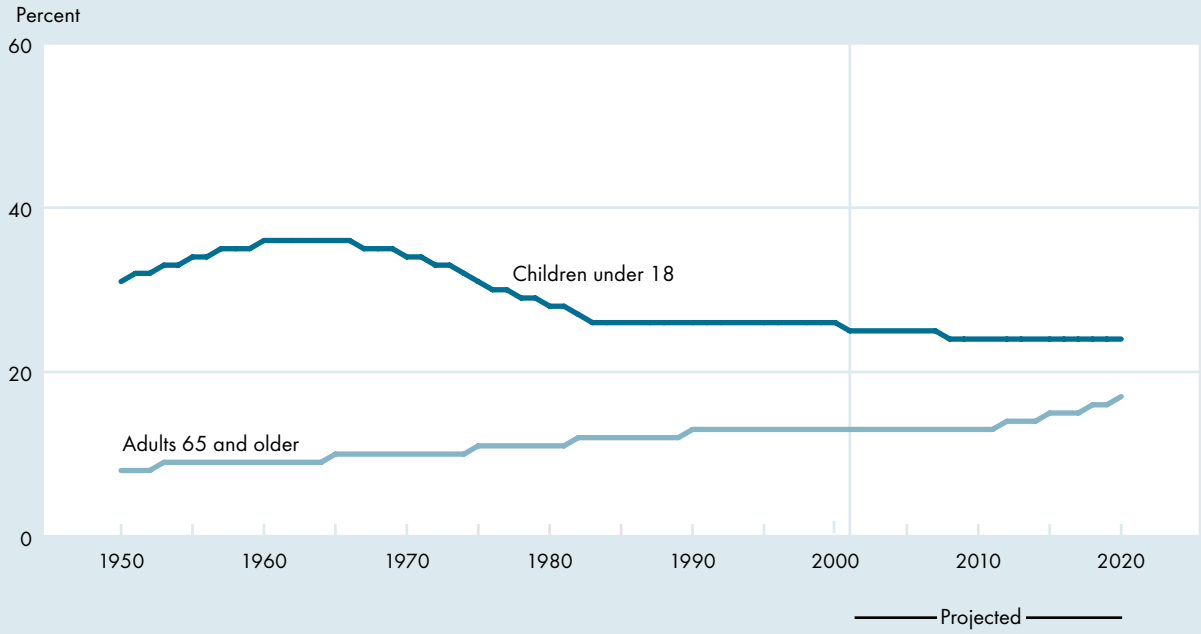
- In 2000, there were 70.4 million children in the United States, 0.2 million more than in 1999. This number is projected to increase to 77.2 million in 2020.
- The number of children under 18 has grown during the last half-century, increasing about half again in size since 1950.
- During the "baby boom" (1946 to 1964), the number of children grew rapidly.
- During the 1970s and 1980s, the number of children declined and then grew slowly.
- Beginning in 1990, the rate of growth in the number of children increased, although not as rapidly as during the baby boom.
- In 2000, there were approximately equal numbers of children—between 23 and 24 million—in each age group 0 to 5, 6 to 11, and 12 to 17 years of age.

Bullets contain references to data that can be found in Table POP1 on page 68.

Children as a Proportion of the Population

Though children represent a smaller percentage of the population today than in 1960, they are nevertheless a stable and substantial portion of the population.

Figure POP2 **Children under age 18 and adults ages 65 and older as a percentage of the U.S. population, 1950-2000 and projected 2001–20**



NOTE: All population figures for the year 2000 shown here are estimates based on the 1990 Census; they do not reflect Census 2000 counts. Population figures for 2001–20 are projections.

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates and Projections.

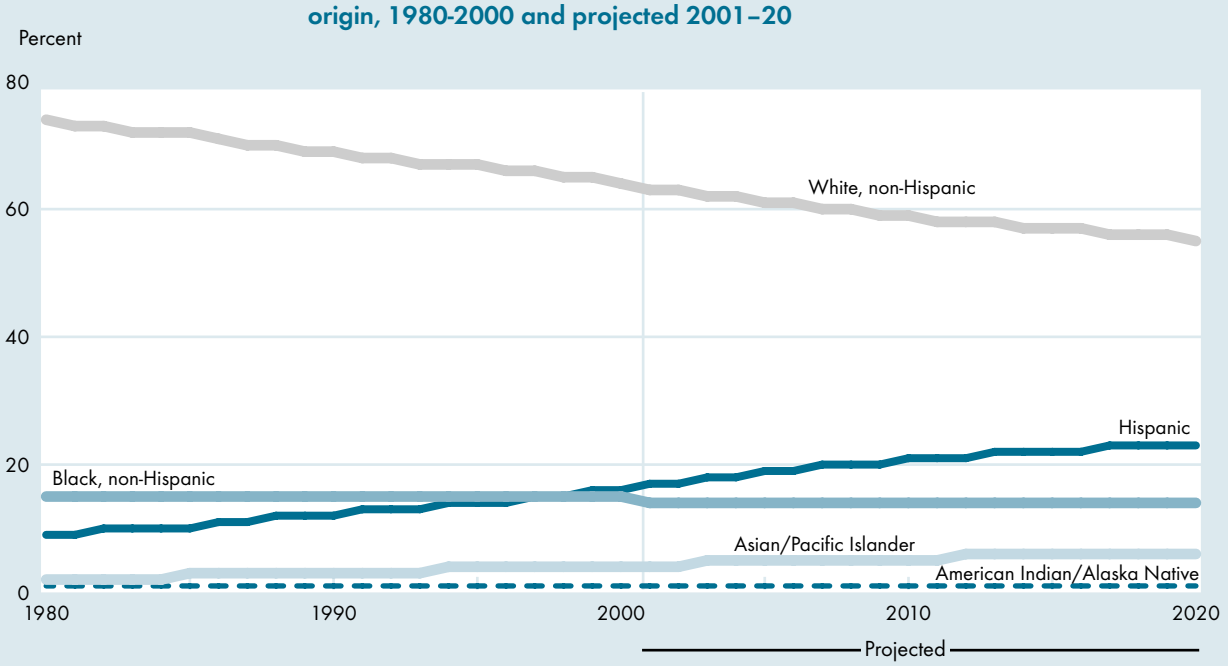
- In 2000, children made up 26 percent of the population, down from a peak of 36 percent at the end of the "baby boom."
- Since the mid-1960s, children have been decreasing as a proportion of the total U.S. population.
- Children are projected to remain a fairly stable percentage of the total population. They are projected to comprise 24 percent of the population in 2020.
- In contrast, senior citizens (adults ages 65 and older) have increased as a percentage of the total population since 1950, from 8 to 13 percent in 2000. By 2020, they are projected to make up 17 percent of the population.
- Together, children and senior citizens make up the "dependent population" (those persons who, because of their age, are less likely to be employed than others). In 1950, children made up 79 percent of the dependent population; by 2000, they made up 67 percent. This percentage is expected to continue to decrease, to 59 percent in 2020.

Bullets contain references to data that can be found in Table POP2 on page 68.

Racial and Ethnic Composition

Racial and ethnic diversity has grown dramatically in the United States in the last three decades. This increased diversity first manifests itself among children, and later in the older population. This diversity is projected to increase even more in the decades to come.

Figure POP3 **Percentage of U.S. children under age 18 by race and Hispanic origin, 1980-2000 and projected 2001–20**



NOTE: All population figures for the year 2000 shown here are estimates based on the 1990 Census; they do not reflect Census 2000 counts. Population figures for 2001–20 are projections.
SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates and Projections.

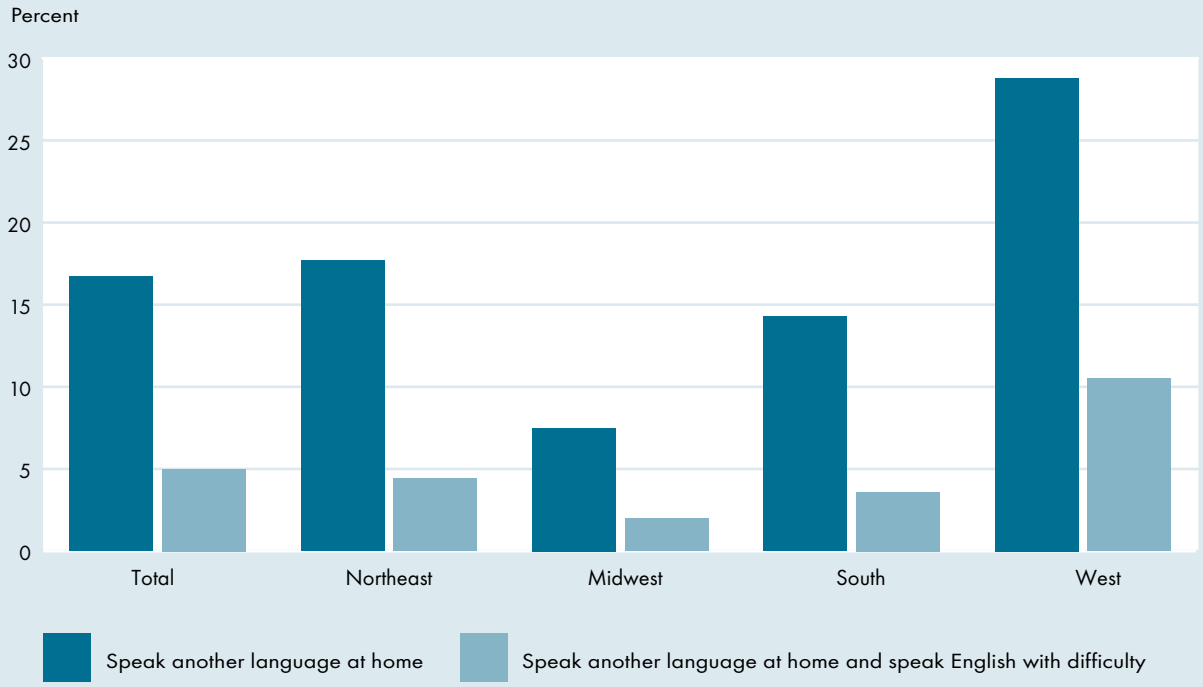
- In 2000, 64 percent of U.S. children were white, non-Hispanic; 16 percent were Hispanic; 15 percent were black, non-Hispanic; 4 percent were Asian/Pacific Islander; and 1 percent were American Indian/Alaska Native.
- The percentage of children who are white, non-Hispanic has decreased from 74 percent in 1980 to 64 percent in 2000.
- The percentages of black, non-Hispanic and American Indian/Alaska Native children have been fairly stable during the period from 1980 to 2000.
- The number of Hispanic children has increased faster than that of any other racial and ethnic group, growing from 9 percent of the child population in 1980 to 16 percent in 2000. By 2020, it is projected that more than 1 in 5 children in the United States will be of Hispanic origin.
- The percentage of Asian/Pacific Islander children doubled from 2 to 4 percent of all U.S. children between 1980 and 2000. Their percentage is projected to continue to increase to 6 percent in 2020.
- Increases in the percentages of Hispanic and Asian/Pacific Islander children are due to both fertility and immigration. Much of the growth in the percentage of Hispanic children is due to the relatively high fertility of Hispanic women.

Bullets contain references to data that can be found in Table POP3 on page 69.

Difficulty Speaking English

Children who speak languages other than English at home and who also have difficulty speaking English[1] may face greater challenges progressing in school and, once they become adults, in the labor market. Once it is determined that a student speaks another language, school officials must, by law, evaluate the child's English ability to determine whether the student needs services such as special instruction to improve his or her English and provide these services if needed.

Figure POP4 **Percentage of children ages 5 to 17 who speak a language other than English at home and who have difficulty speaking English by region, 1999**



SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, October Current Population Survey. Tabulated by the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

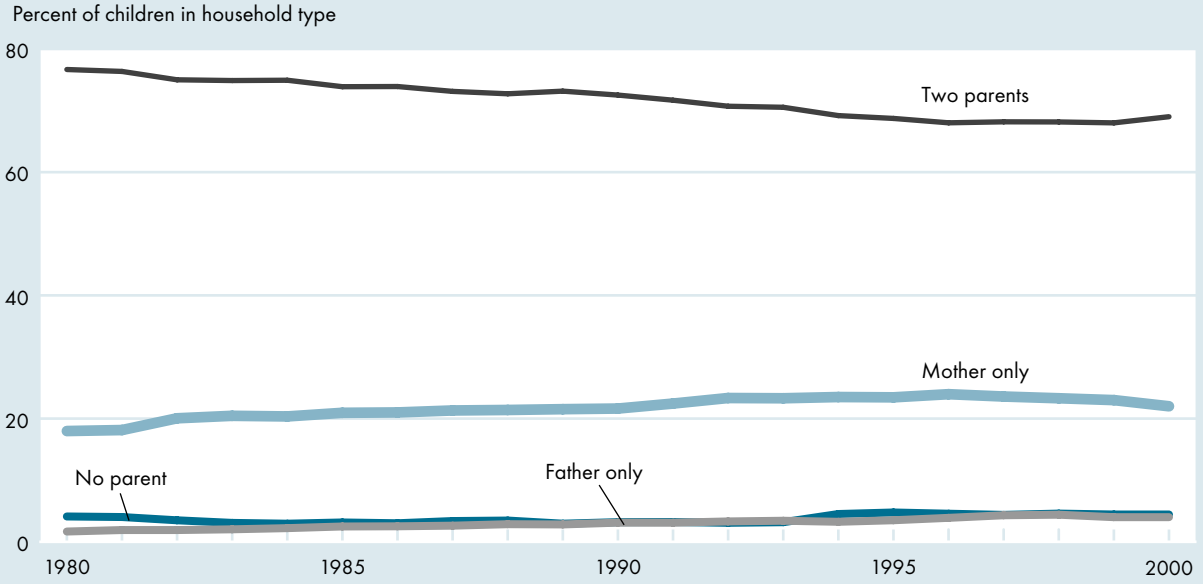
- The number of school-age children (ages 5 to 17) who spoke a language other than English at home and who had difficulty speaking English was 2.6 million in 1999, double the number (1.3 million) in 1979. This represented 5 percent of all school-age children in the United States.
- The percentage of children who speak English with difficulty varies by region of the country, from 2 percent of children in the Midwest to 11 percent of children in the West.
- Likewise, the percentage of children who speak another language at home (with or without difficulty speaking English) varies by region of the country, from 8 percent of children in the Midwest to 29 percent of children in the West. This difference is due largely to differing concentrations of immigrants and their descendants in the regions.
- White, non-Hispanic and black, non-Hispanic children are less likely than children of Hispanic or other (mostly Asian) origin to have difficulty speaking English. One percent of white, non-Hispanic and black, non-Hispanic children had difficulty speaking English in 1999, compared with 23 percent of children of Hispanic origin and 12 percent of children of Asian or other origin.

Bullets contain references to data that can be found in Table POP4 on page 70. Endnotes begin on page 58.

Family Structure and Children's Living Arrangements

The number of parents living with a child is generally linked to the amount and quality of human and economic resources available to that child. Children who live in a household with one parent are substantially more likely to have family incomes below the poverty line than are children who live in a household with two parents.

Figure POP5.A **Percentage of children under age 18 by presence of parents in household, 1980-2000**

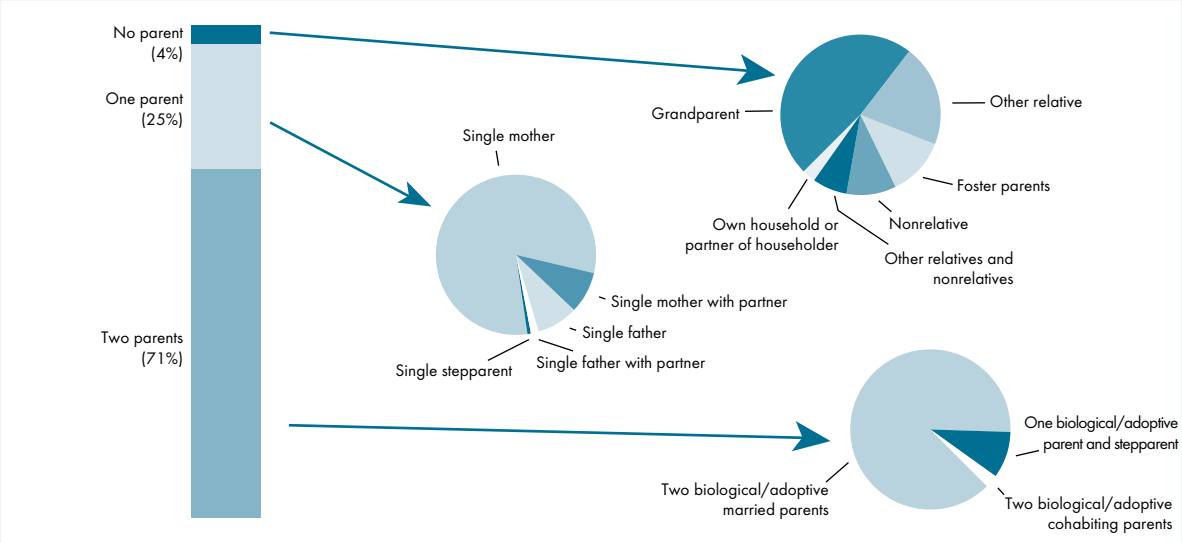


SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, March Current Population Survey.

- In 2000, 69 percent of American children lived with two parents, down from 77 percent in 1980.
- In 2000, about a fifth (22 percent) of children lived with only their mothers, 4 percent lived with only their fathers, and 4 percent lived with neither of their parents.[2]
- Since 1996, the percentage of children living with only one parent has not changed significantly.
- Among the factors associated with the change from 1980-96 in the percentage of children living with just one parent is the percentage of births that were to unmarried mothers.[3]
- White, non-Hispanic children are much more likely than black children and somewhat more likely than Hispanic children to live with two parents. In 2000, 77 percent of white, non-Hispanic children lived with two parents, compared with 38 percent of black children and 65 percent of children of Hispanic origin.

Most children spend the majority of their childhood living with two parents; however, significant proportions of children have more diverse living arrangements. Information about the presence of parents and other adults in the family, such as the parent's unmarried partner, grandparents, and other relatives, is important for understanding children's social, economic, and developmental well-being.

Figure POP5.B **Percentage of children under age 18 living in various family arrangements, 1996**



SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation.

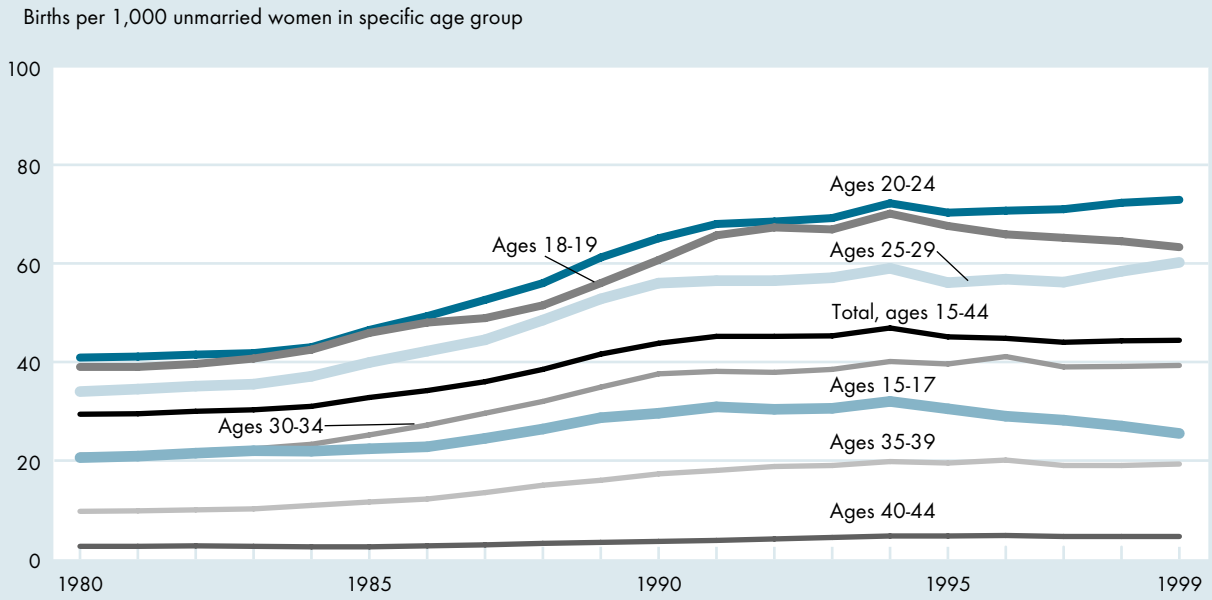
- A more detailed picture of children's living arrangements can be provided by a different data source than that used in POP5.A. The most recent data on various living arrangements are from 1996, 4 years earlier than the data presented in POP5.A, page 6. Therefore, the percentages shown in POP5.A are different from those in POP5.B. In 1996, there were 71.5 million children under age 18. Seventy-one percent of them lived with two parents, 25 percent lived with one parent, and about 4 percent lived in households without parents.
- Among children living with two parents, 91 percent lived with both biological or adoptive parents and 9 percent lived with a biological or adoptive parent and a stepparent. About four-fifths of children living with a stepparent lived with their mother and a stepfather.
- About 3 percent of children who lived with both biological or adoptive parents had parents who were not married.
- The majority of children living with one parent lived with their single mother. Some of these single parents had cohabiting partners. Sixteen percent of children living with single fathers and 9 percent of children living with single mothers also lived with their parents' partners. Overall, 3.3 million children (5 percent) lived with a parent or parents who were cohabiting.
- Among the 2.6 million children (4 percent) not living with either parent in 1996, half (1.3 million) lived with grandparents, while about 21 percent lived with other relatives, and another 22 percent lived with nonrelatives. Of children in nonrelatives' homes, about half (313,000) lived with foster parents.
- Older children were less likely to live with two parents—66 percent of children ages 15 to 17 compared with 71 percent of children ages 5 to 14 and 74 percent of those under age 5. Among children living with two parents, older children were more likely than younger children to live with a stepparent and less likely to live with cohabiting parents.

Bullets contain references to data that can be found in Tables POP5.A and POP5.B on pages 71-73. Endnotes begin on page 58.

Births to Unmarried Women

Increases in births to unmarried women are among the many changes in American society that have affected family structure and the economic security of children.[3] Children of unmarried mothers are at higher risk of having adverse birth outcomes, such as low birthweight and infant mortality, and are more likely to live in poverty than children of married mothers.[4-7]

Figure POP6.A **Birth rates for unmarried women by age of mother, 1980-99**

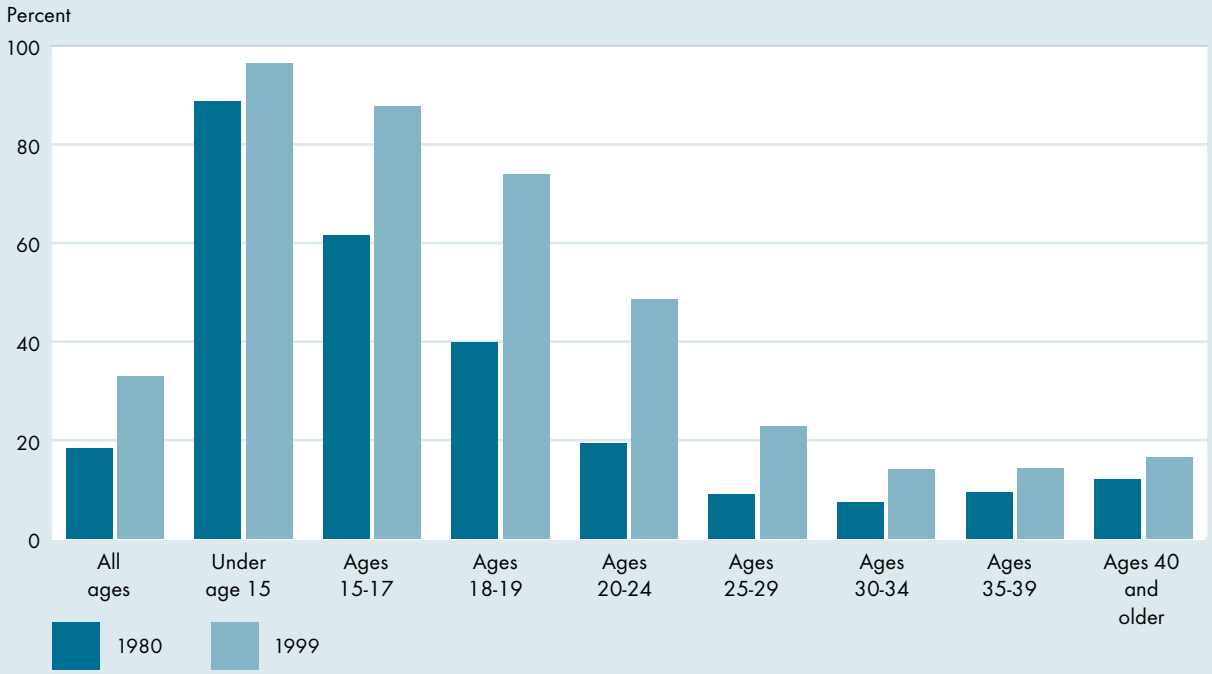


SOURCE: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics System.

- There were 44 births for every 1,000 unmarried women ages 15 to 44 in 1999.
- Between 1980 and 1994, the birth rate for unmarried women ages 15 to 44 increased from 29 to 47 per 1,000. The rate has since stabilized; between 1994 and 1997-99 the rate fell slightly to 44 per 1,000.
- During the 1980-94 period, birth rates increased sharply for unmarried women in all age groups. The birth rate for unmarried women ages 15 to 17 increased from 21 to 32 per 1,000, and the rate for unmarried women ages 18 to 19 rose from 39 to 70 per 1,000. The birth rate for unmarried women ages 20 to 24 increased from 41 to 72 per 1,000. Between 1994 and 1999, rates by age declined for all women under age 20 and stabilized for women 20 and older.
- The long-term rise between 1960 and 1994 in the nonmarital birth rate is linked to a number of factors.[7] The proportion of women of childbearing age who are unmarried increased (from 29 percent in 1960 to 46 percent in 1994), concurrent with an increase in nonmarital cohabitation. About 20 to 25 percent of unmarried women ages 25 to 44 were in cohabiting relationships in 1992-94.[8] The likelihood that an unmarried woman will marry before the child is born declined steeply from the early 1960s to the early 1980s and continued to fall, although more modestly, through the early 1990s.[9] At the same time, childbearing within marriage declined: births to married women declined from 4 million in 1960 to 2.7 million in 1994, and the birth rate for married women fell from 157 per 1,000 in 1960 to 84 per 1,000 in 1994.[5-7] All of these measures stabilized in the mid-1990s, as the nonmarital birth rate also steadied.

Children are at greater risk for adverse consequences when born to a single mother because the social, emotional, and financial resources available to the family may be more limited.[4] The proportion of births to unmarried women is useful for understanding the extent to which children born in a given year may be affected by any disadvantage—social, financial, or health—associated with being born outside of marriage. This measure is also useful in monitoring trends and variations in births to unmarried women at the State and local levels.[10] The percentage of births to unmarried women is affected by several factors, including birth rates for married and unmarried women and the number of unmarried women. Significant changes occurred in all these measures between 1980 and 1999.[6,7,11]

Figure POP6.B **Percentage of all births that are to unmarried women by age of mother, 1980 and 1999**



SOURCE: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics System.

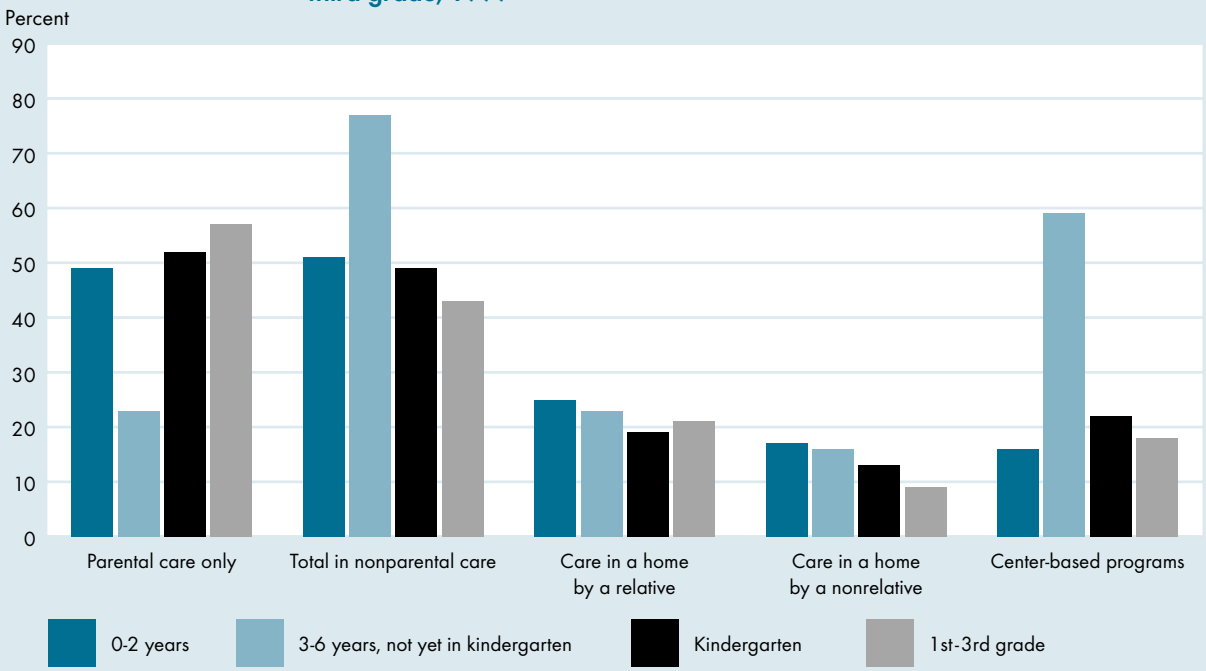
- In 1999, 33 percent of all births were to unmarried women.
- The percentage of all births to unmarried women rose sharply from 18 percent in 1980 to 33 percent in 1994. From 1994 to 1997, the proportion was relatively stable at about 32 percent, and then increased slightly to 33 percent in 1998-99.[5,7,12]
- During the 1980-99 period, the proportions of births to unmarried women rose sharply for women in all age groups. Among teenagers, the proportions were high throughout the period and continued to rise, from 62 to 88 percent for ages 15 to 17 and from 40 to 74 percent for ages 18 to 19. The proportions more than doubled for births to women in their twenties, rising from 19 to 49 percent for ages 20 to 24 and from 9 to 23 percent for ages 25 to 29. The proportion of births to unmarried women ages 30 and older increased from 8 to 14 percent.[7,12]
- One-third of all births, including 4 in 10 first births, were to unmarried women in 1999. Nearly two-thirds of women under age 25 having their first child were not married.
- The increases in the proportions of births to unmarried women, especially during the 1980s, are linked to sharp increases in the birth rates for unmarried women in all age groups during this period, concurrent with declines in birth rates for married women. In addition, the number of unmarried women increased by about one-fourth as more and more women from the baby-boom generation postponed marriage.[7,11]

Bullets contain references to data that can be found in Tables POP6.A and POP6.B on page 74. Endnotes begin on page 58.

Child Care

Increasing proportions of children are spending substantial amounts of time in the care of a child-care provider other than their parents. While researchers continue to assess the effects of child care on child development, it is important to monitor over time the way many children receive care. Children receive a variety of types of care, including care in home by a relative, care in home by a nonrelative, and center-based care or early education. This indicator presents the most recent data on regular child-care arrangements regardless of parents' work status and the types of settings where that care is provided, by the age of the child.

Figure POP7 **Percentage of children by type of care arrangement from birth through third grade, 1999**



NOTE: Some children participate in more than one type of arrangement, so the sum of all arrangement types exceeds the total percentage in nonparental care. Center-based programs include day care centers, prekindergartens, nursery schools, Head Start programs, and other early childhood education programs. Relative and nonrelative care can take place in either the child's own home or another home.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Household Education Survey.

- In 1999, 54 percent of children from birth through 3rd grade received some form of child care on a regular basis from persons other than their parents. This translates to close to 20 million children and represents an increase over 1995, when 51 percent of children through 3rd grade received child care.
- The type of child care received is related to the age of the child. Children from birth through age 2 were more likely to be in home-based care, either with a relative or nonrelative, than to be in center-based care. Forty-one percent were in home-based care (about 24 percent with a relative and 17 percent with a nonrelative), and about 16 percent were in center-based care in 1999.
- Children ages 3 to 6 who are not yet in kindergarten are more likely to be in a center-based child-care arrangement, which includes nursery schools and other early childhood education programs. Sixty percent of these children were in center-based care, compared to 39 percent in home-based care (23 percent in relative care and 16 percent in nonrelative care) in 1999.
- Kindergartners were more likely to be in home-based care (33 percent) than in center-based care (22 percent).
- Among children attending 1st through 3rd grade, children were more likely to be in home-based care with a relative (21 percent) than in a center (18 percent) or in a home with a nonrelative (9 percent) in 1999.
- About 22 percent of 3- to 6-year-olds were in multiple types of arrangements, compared with 6 percent in the other age groups.

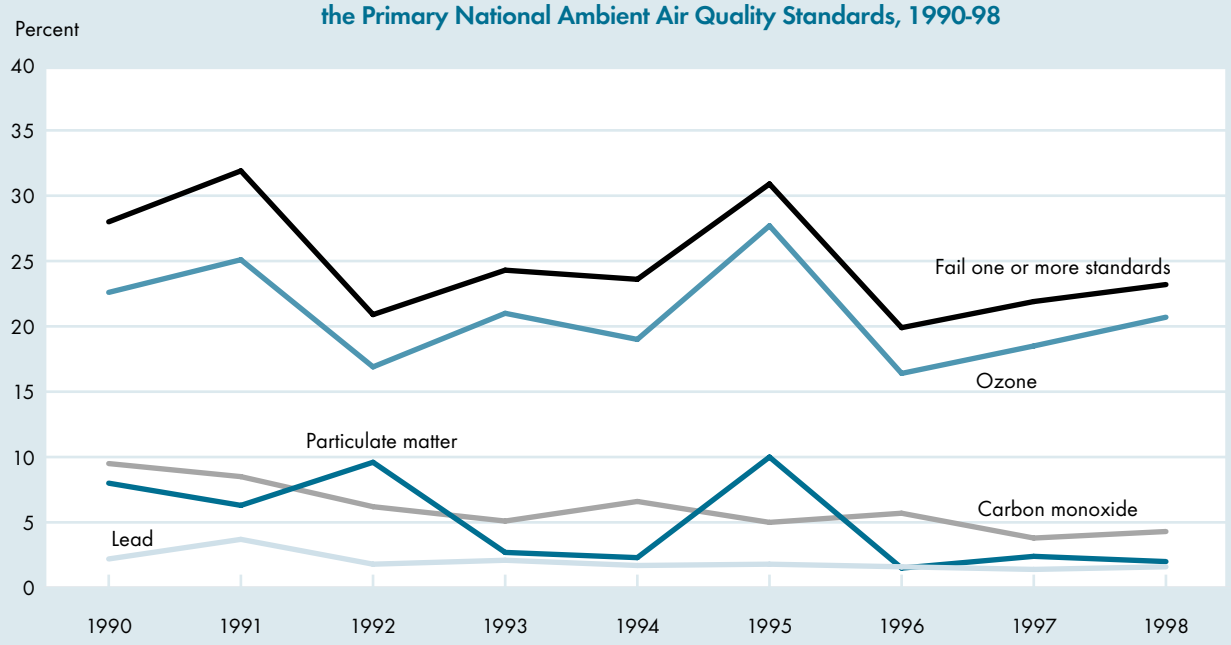
Bullets contain references to data that can be found in Table POP7 on page 75.

Children's Environments

The environment in which children live plays an important role in their health and development. Children need a clean, safe place in which they can grow and play. Children may be more vulnerable to environmental contaminants because of their increased potential for exposure to pollutants, since they eat, drink, and breathe more per body weight than adults. In addition, environmental contaminants in air, food, drinking water, and other sources are associated with a number of different ailments, and these contaminants may disproportionately affect children because they are still developing.[13-17] One important measure of environmental quality is the percentage of children living in areas that do not meet the National Ambient Air Quality Standards. Polluted air is associated with increased asthma episodes and other respiratory illnesses. While air pollution is one important measure of children's environments, further research is needed to develop a more complete measure of overall environmental quality for children.

Figure POP8

Percentage of children under age 18 living in areas that do not meet at least one of the Primary National Ambient Air Quality Standards, 1990-98



NOTE: The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has set national air quality standards for six principal pollutants (referred to as "criteria" pollutants): carbon monoxide (CO), lead (Pb), nitrogen dioxide (NO_2), ozone (O_3), particulate matter (PM), and sulfur dioxide (SO_2). Nitrogen dioxide and sulfur dioxide are not included in the graph because essentially all areas met the Primary National Ambient Air Quality Standards for these pollutants after 1991.

SOURCE: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Air and Radiation, Aerometric Information Retrieval System.

- In 1998, 23 percent of children lived in areas that did not meet at least one of the Primary National Ambient Air Quality Standards, down from 28 percent in 1990. The Clean Air Act established Primary National Ambient Air Quality Standards which are designed to establish limits to protect public health, including the health of sensitive populations such as asthmatics and children.
- In 1998, 2 percent of children, or approximately 1 million, lived in areas that did not meet the National Ambient Air Quality Standard for lead. High levels of lead are dangerous to children because they can lead to neurological and developmental problems.
- The EPA is implementing new standards for particulate matter and ozone to better protect public health, including children. This chart does not reflect the new standards.
- Ozone accounts for most of the areas that do not meet the Primary National Ambient Air Quality Standards. Both particulate matter and ozone can cause respiratory problems and aggravate respiratory diseases, such as asthma, in children. These problems can lead to hospital and emergency room visits.

Bullets contain references to data that can be found in Table POP8 on page 76. Endnotes begin on page 58.

Data Needed

Population and Family Characteristics

Current data collection systems at the national level do not provide extensive detailed information on children's lives, their families and their caregivers. Certain topical databases provide some of this information, but data need to be collected across domains of child well-being and to be collected regularly enough to discern trends in where, how, and with whom children spend their time. More data are also needed on:

- *Family interactions.* Information is needed about children's interactions with non-resident parents, particularly fathers. A subcommittee of the Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics is currently working to improve data on family formation and fatherhood.
- *Time use.* A regular source of data is needed to track how and where children spend their time and how these patterns change over time. For example, data on how much time children spend in school, in day care, in after-school activities, using a computer, and interacting with one or both parents and how much time youth spend at work would provide valuable insights. Currently, Federal surveys collect information on the amount of time children spend on certain activities, such as watching television, but no regular Federal data source examines time spent on the whole spectrum of children's activities. The inclusion in surveys of additional questions on time use by children and adults is currently being investigated by several member agencies of the Forum. The Bureau of Labor Statistics has plans to conduct a continuous time use survey, beginning in 2003, that will cover time invested in the care of children, as well as time spent in other market and non-market activities.
- *Children's environments.* Further data are needed to monitor the environments of children and their potential exposure to environmental contaminants. In particular, data are needed to describe children's potential exposure to contaminants in drinking water and food.